

Columbia River Toxics Reduction Strategy
An EPA National Priority
EPA Region 10 - Seattle

Description of activity: At 1,214 miles in length, boasting a 260,000 square mile drainage basin, the Columbia River Basin spans portions of Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Wyoming, Nevada, Utah, Montana, and a substantial portion of British Columbia. The Columbia River Basin is comprised of ecosystems that are home to a diverse array of biologically significant plants and animals. The Basin is also a dynamic economic engine driving many industries vital to the Pacific Northwest, including sport and commercial fisheries, agriculture, transportation, recreation and, with 55 hydropower dams, electrical power generation.

EPA designated the Columbia River as a priority Large Aquatic Ecosystem in EPA's 2006-2011 Strategic Plan with a focus on reducing toxics. Our goal is to protect public health and the environment by reducing toxics loads in fish, water and sediment of the Columbia River Basin. As a result of the increased attention, we have established numeric environmental targets to reach over the next 5 years. Those targets, which were established in collaboration with many entities, include wetland restoration, sediment clean up and toxics reduction in fish and water.

To achieve this daunting task, EPA Region 10 has created the Columbia River Toxics Reduction Strategy led by a Region 10 interdisciplinary team that provides leadership on a collaborative effort with State and Tribal partners, the Lower Columbia River Estuary Partnership (LCREP) and other entities. Partners have agreed on mutual goals to identify and clean up contaminated sediments, restore critical wetlands and reduce toxics in water, land and fish. Under this strategy, EPA, States, Tribes and others are meeting on a periodic basis to systematically expand key actions in the Columbia River Basin, such as fish, water and sediment monitoring; pesticide stewardship partnerships; targeted pesticide collections; precision agriculture and related activities. EPA's National Estuary Program plays a key role in toxics reduction through LCREP's leadership in monitoring, assessment and habitat restoration in the Lower Columbia River estuary.

The Columbia River Toxics Working Group has been established to coordinate these efforts. A major effort now underway is the collaborative development of the Columbia River Basin State of the River Report to: tell the story of the toxics problem and potential solutions for the Columbia River Basin; serve as a catalyst for increased stakeholder involvement and future action; and garner resources for future reduction efforts and assessments. A final report is expected in late 2008.

Interagency Partners: U.S. Geological Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Other Partners: Oregon Department of Environmental Quality, Washington Department of Ecology, Idaho Department of Environmental Quality, Lower Columbia River Estuary Partnership (LCREP), Oregon and Washington Departments of Health, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Umatilla Tribe, Yakama Indian Nation, Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission, Nez Perce Tribe, Warm Springs Tribe, Siletz Tribe, Grand Ronde Tribe, and Columbia Riverkeeper

URL: www.epa.gov/region10/columbia